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# Playing with the Chopin Sources

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John Rink

Never before have musicians and musicologists had such easy access to the manuscripts and first editions of Chopin's works. For decades it was necessary to order microfilms, photocopies or photographs from the libraries or other institutions that held these sources, and quite apart from the resultant expense and delay it was often difficult to discern the finest details because of the poor quality of reproduction. Facsimile editions of the manuscripts were better in that respect, but they too were not widely available, nor did they extend to the full range of extant sources; moreover, the standard of reproduction remained variable until recently.<sup>1</sup>

These difficulties have largely been resolved thanks to the advent of the World Wide Web. For example, the Chopin Early Editions site hosted by the University of Chicago Library provides high-specification digital images of 'over 400 first and early printed editions of musical compositions' by Chopin.<sup>2</sup> Two further web resources – Chopin's First Editions Online (CFEO)<sup>3</sup> and the Online Chopin Variorum Edition (OCVE)<sup>4</sup> – make available an even wider range of primary material, including early impressions of the first editions for the vast majority of Chopin's works (CFEO), and both manuscripts and early as well as subsequent impressions of the first editions of select genres (OCVE). There is also the (rather motley) collection available on the Petrucci Music Library website,<sup>5</sup> not to mention other online repositories of varying standards. All of these sites are free of charge and simple to use. In addition, CFEO and OCVE offer a great deal of information about the constituent sources and the compositional and publication histories surrounding them. Much of this information is drawn from a recently published 'annotated catalogue', which is generally viewed as the most comprehensive and systematic study of the first editions to date.<sup>6</sup>

Two interesting questions arise from these developments:

- Is there now too much access to these sources?
- Is 'immediacy' of this kind all that desirable?

1 In contrast to the series *Faksymilowane wydanie autografów F. Chopina* published by PWM (Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne), the volumes in the *Wydanie Faksymilowe dzieł Chopina* produced by the Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina offer remarkable likenesses of the original sources, as do select volumes published by Henle Verlag, Universal Edition, etc.

2 <http://chopin.lib.uchicago.edu/>.

3 <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/>.

4 <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/>.

5 <http://imslp.org/wiki/>.

6 Christophe Grabowski and John Rink, *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).



Some scholars would respectively answer 'Yes' and 'No', although my own views are rather different. I nevertheless accept that the increasing availability of the Chopin sources presents unprecedented challenges, not least because they are often difficult to understand both in themselves and within Chopin's output as a whole, as well as in the context of early nineteenth-century compositional and publication practices more generally. Nothing would be worse than an explosion of misapprehension and false confidence arising from widespread contact with the original sources. So perhaps the next question to ask is whether the users of online Chopin resources have any *responsibilities* when investigating what the composer wrote and in tracing the subsequent history of his music in his own hands and in the printed editions that emerged over the years. Such responsibilities could entail simply 'doing one's homework' about how given sources evolved or what particular notational habits Chopin might have employed in such and such a passage. But to fathom the manuscript and printed material alike requires extensive knowledge that can be gained only through years of study and reflection, coupled with an awareness that the 'right answers' may never be found because of lacunae, inconsistencies and ambiguities in the sources.

This essay explores some of the issues surrounding the primary source material before outlining a number of principles and procedures relevant to their study. The aim is not only to acquire a more informed understanding of 'Chopin's intentions' (which remains a problematic notion, however much we pay lip service to it)<sup>7</sup> but also to unlock the creative potential latent within these sources. Our first step is to survey the latter and to present some case-study examples from which general principles will be drawn.

## The primary sources

Chopin's genius for invention meant that his music experienced continual change from the moment of conception onwards, whether in preparing or copying his manuscripts, in subsequent performances, during lessons with students, or even in his thoughts. It will be useful to consider the different types of source material that this ongoing evolution engendered. Chopin left behind relatively few sketches, although it is fascinating to pore over those that do survive. That is also the case with so-called 'rejected public manuscripts', which were intended for a publisher or another party but which Chopin either abandoned or withheld from circulation. There is a significant body of *Stichvorlagen* (literally 'print models' – i.e. manuscripts intended to be used by publishers in preparing their editions), likewise a small number of proofs for the first editions, either corrected or uncorrected. The first editions themselves pose major challenges because of their diversity and complex interrelationships. The fact that Chopin tended to bring out multiple

7 For discussion see John Rink, 'Work in progress: l'oeuvre infini(e) de Chopin', in *Interpréter Chopin*, ed. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger (Paris: Cité de la Musique, 2006), pp. 82–90.



first editions in France, England and the German states in order to maximise copyright protection is well known,<sup>8</sup> and the differences between both the earliest impressions of these editions and those that followed are now more fully understood. Other autograph sources include presentation manuscripts (which generally were intended as gifts or keepsakes, and often were notated with fewer performance indications than one would find in a *Stichvorlage*) as well as Chopin's annotations in the scores used by his students. Non-autograph material includes glosses in the student scores which cannot be attributed to Chopin (and which therefore may have less authority, although this should not always be assumed) and partial or complete copies of works which may have been prepared with or without the composer's authorisation. Finally, first editions of pieces for which no other source material survives may be regarded as primary material, among them the Nocturne in E minor, published posthumously in 1855 as Op. 72 No. 1. Table 1 presents a typological summary of these sources.

Table 1 Chopin: primary sources

- |   |
|---|
| 1) sketches   |
| 2) rejected public manuscripts                                  |
| 3) <i>Stichvorlagen</i>   |
| 4) proofs   |
| 5) first editions – first and subsequent impressions            |
| – French  |
| – German/Austrian   |
| – English   |
| – other (Polish, Italian, etc.)                                 |
| 6) other autograph sources                                      |
| 7) other non-autograph sources                                  |
| 8) editions of pieces for which no other source material exists |

The range and number of sources will vary with the individual piece, as do the relationships between them. Two contrasting 'source lists' – for the Concerto in E minor Op. 11 and the Polonaise-Fantasy Op. 61 – will suffice in this context, although innumerable other cases of interest and relevance could be cited.

No sketch material can be located for the E minor Concerto (composed in 1830 and first published in 1833), nor does the earliest complete manuscript survive.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that the latter served as the *Stichvorlage* of the French first edition, of

8 For further discussion see Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, pp. xxii ff.

9 The only surviving autograph manuscript is Chopin's reduction of the first tutti (bars 1–138) for solo piano, which Schlesinger used as the *Stichvorlage* for this passage when preparing the French first edition. For further details of the sources for this work see Fryderyk Chopin, *Concerto Op. 11*, ed. John Rink (London: Peters Edition, 2008).



which multiple proofsheets were sent to Leipzig and London for use in engraving the German and English editions respectively. These proofsheets – which Chopin would have corrected, however carefully or consistently – no longer exist. We do have access to most of the reprints that were produced of the three first editions,<sup>10</sup> the music text of which remained largely unchanged except in the case of the English edition, where numerous editorial alterations were made in a revised impression dating from c. 1856–1860. Glosses can be found in a number of scores used by Chopin's students; some can be attributed directly to Chopin, while others are in a different hand but may reflect his teaching.

A quite different body of source material exists for the *Polonaise-Fantasy* (composed 1845–1846; published 1846), including nine pages of sketches along with two of the three autograph manuscripts that Chopin ended up preparing for respective publishers as he had no reliable amanuensis at the time. Those serving as *Stichvorlagen* for the French and German editions survive, whereas the one used for the English first edition cannot be located. For these editions, there was no need for publishers to exchange proofsheets as each had access to a distinct autograph manuscript. It seems that no reprints of any of the first editions appeared during Chopin's lifetime, which is not altogether surprising as they were published just three years before his death in 1849; however, each was reissued at various stages thereafter, and with changes to the music text in later impressions of the German and English first editions, whereas the one reprint of the French first edition from 1873 was unaltered in this respect.<sup>11</sup>

A number of conclusions emerge from these examples. First, a unique creative history exists for each and every piece by Chopin, to the point that it can be difficult to define common publication scenarios as so many variants on the basic patterns can be observed.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, to privilege one source without taking into

10 Two subsequent reprints of the French first edition appeared during Chopin's lifetime, followed by six posthumous ones; Kistner produced three reprints of the German edition of Op. 11 before Chopin's death, the last of which remained on the market until 1858, when a second edition came out; and at least four posthumous reprints of the English first edition were released. For details see Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, pp. 80–85.

11 For further information see *ibid.*, pp. 426–429.

12 In a paper entitled 'Chopin: On paper, in sound' presented at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama on 25 October 2010 I outlined the following:

1. three discrete variants of the 'Op. 11 scenario' described here;
2. a second scenario (of which several variants also exist) whereby a scribal copy of Chopin's autograph manuscript was sent to the German publisher, while proofsheets of the French first edition were used as a *Stichvorlage* for the English first edition (e.g. Ballade Op. 38 – 1840);
3. a similar scenario (again with variants), except that Chopin's autograph manuscript was sent to the German publisher whereas the scribal copy was used as the basis of the French first edition, a revised impression of which then served as a *Stichvorlage* for the English first edition (e.g. Ballade Op. 47 – 1841);
4. the 'Op. 61 scenario', in which three autograph manuscripts were produced, with the earliest one typically serving as the *Stichvorlage* for the French first edition.

These scenarios only hint at the full complexity surrounding individual sources and the filiations between them. Furthermore, this is by no means an exhaustive list of the routes to publication that Chopin followed: others were adopted at different stages of his career.



account all of the others that exist may lead to false conclusions about Chopin's intentions and about the status of the source in question. For example, the third beat of bar 20 in the Polonaise-Fantasy is quite different in the two surviving autograph manuscripts. In the one used to prepare the French first edition (and presumably also the lost manuscript used for the English first edition, which is virtually identical to its French counterpart in this passage), the left-hand chord includes the root of the harmony – a low D-sharp – while the semiquaver *échappée* at the end of the bar is a B-sharp. In contrast, in the German edition and the respective *Stichvorlage* the chord on beat 3 has no root in the bass while the semiquaver *échappée* is a B-natural.<sup>13</sup> A traditional interpretation of these discrepancies might be that the contents of the Breitkopf manuscript and the edition it gave rise to are definitive, representing Chopin's ostensible 'final intentions'. On the other hand, the harmonically simpler version in these sources might reflect either a (regrettable?) change of mind away from a bolder 'first inspiration' or, conceivably, inattentive copying on Chopin's part. But rather than think in terms of either 'first inspirations' or 'final intentions' – categories which ultimately prove restrictive if not downright simplistic – it is better to understand the discrepant readings as multiple creative possibilities that emanated from Chopin's musical imagination at different times. Thus, neither earlier nor later is necessarily 'better': each version has its place and, depending on the pianist's wishes, each may be used in modern-day performances though ideally with some sort of explanation (possibly in a programme note) about the choice that was made out of the various options. It goes without saying that the implications of this for our understanding of the Chopin work are vast: here we find evidence not of a fixed conception but instead of the musical work 'in progress', flexibly conceived by the composer and susceptible to further shaping by us.

Before conclusions can be confidently drawn from one or more sources within the nexus that may exist for a particular piece, it is necessary to ask a series of questions, all of which must routinely be addressed by those preparing editions whether of Chopin's music or that of another composer:

### 1. What is the 'status' of a given source?

'Status' can be interpreted in several ways. First of all, one must determine which categories in Table 1 are relevant to the source in question. For instance, if the source is a score used by one of Chopin's students, it is important to know not only the particular edition but also the impression thereof. The scores of the Etudes Op. 10 used by Jane Stirling and Camille Dubois contain markings arising from their lessons with Chopin, but in the former case it was the fifth impression of the French first edition and in the latter the seventh impression. This may not

13 The two *Stichvorlagen* and the French, German and English editions of Op. 61 can be compared at <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/>; for the editions see also <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/>.



matter with regard to the music text of these two impressions, which remained unchanged between their respective publication dates, but it is significant in a broader context in that changes to the music were introduced in the second and third impressions, hence the need to regard the Stirling and Dubois scores not as the original version of the French first edition but as reprints containing revisions from a previous stage of development.

Status also has to do with the quality of the source in terms of the clarity and legibility of the notation – whether printed or handwritten – as well as the musical content itself. By way of example, a given first edition may have been systematically copy-edited prior to publication, despite which its content could paradoxically be less authoritative than that of a relatively sloppy counterpart which nevertheless reflects Chopin's intentions to a greater extent. This is often the case with the English first editions, in many of which such features as accidentals, slurrings and pedallings are more consistently presented than in their French and German counterparts, although the French edition may have an edge because of the composer's greater input to the publication process, including the ability to make changes at proof stage or beyond. In such cases the apparent advantages of a 'cleaner', more consistent source should be regarded with circumspection not only in general but particularly by anyone preparing an edition of Chopin's music according to a 'best text' approach.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Under what conditions was it produced?

I have already alluded to different conditions of production, the full range of which ideally should be borne in mind when studying a particular source. For instance, special care may be needed in interpreting the music text of multiple autograph manuscripts, not only to determine the order of production but also to avoid taking at face value apparent innovations which may simply be copying errors rather than intentional changes. In the last of the three autographs that he produced of the Barcarolle Op. 60, which eventually served as the *Stichvorlage* for the Breitkopf edition, Chopin seems more or less consistently to have shifted to the right markings such as pedal releases as well as the ends of decrescendo and crescendo hairpins.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the long hairpin following the *forte* sign in bar 1 of this manuscript should probably not be taken literally, in that the earliest surviving complete autograph, which was used to prepare the French first edition, features not a diminuendo hairpin but a 'long accent' after the *forte* (this combination being typical of Chopin's notational praxis).<sup>16</sup> Compare too the English first edition – based on an intermediate autograph, now lost – where the

14 For discussion of the latter see James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65 and passim.

15 For discussion see John Rink, 'Chopin copying Chopin', in *Chopin's Work: His Inspirations and Creative Process in the Light of the Sources*, ed. Artur Szklener (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2003), pp. 67–81.

16 See John Rink, 'Les Concertos de Chopin et la notation de l'exécution', in *Frédéric Chopin, interprétations*, ed. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2005), pp. 69–88.



hairpin extends further to the right but less so than in the Breitkopf manuscript. In short, the extended decrescendo hairpin in the last of the three autographs is almost certainly the result of a copying mistake on Chopin's part – a conclusion which arises from comparison of all the relevant documentation.<sup>17</sup>

The French first editions published by Troupenas provide another example of the need to take conditions of production into account when reviewing sources. The contents of these editions show various signs of haste:

Chopin's strained relations with Schlesinger and Pleyel left him in the awkward position of having no French publisher just when he needed one in order to keep pace with the German editions of several works then being prepared in Leipzig. Under pressure of time he turned to Troupenas, ceding the rights to Opp. 35–41 in March 1840 and to the Tarantella Op. 43 a few months later. It is hardly surprising that in these circumstances the French editions of Opp. 35–37 were hastily produced; indeed, Troupenas barely had time to engrave the music text between signing the contract in late March and depositing a copy of each in mid-May. His solution was to deposit uncorrected proofs of Opp. 35 & 37 rather than finished copies, while Op. 36, registered at the same time, was in a more advanced state but still far from definitive. The fact that Opp. 38, 40 & 41 were also deposited at proof stage is harder to explain, given that in principle Troupenas had more than five months to prepare these editions – unless Chopin was late in submitting his manuscripts to the publisher.<sup>18</sup>

Knowledge of these circumstances is helpful if not essential when viewing the Troupenas scores in the online resources described earlier. For example, compare the versions of the third movement of the Sonata Op. 35 shown in the CFEO and Chopin Early Editions (hereafter 'Chicago') resources. The French first edition in CFEO is in fact the uncorrected Troupenas proof that was provided to fulfil the requirements of the *dépôt légal*;<sup>19</sup> the third movement here lacks a tempo indication but it does have the sub-caption 'Marche funèbre', the title by which the Sonata as a whole has been known for generations. In contrast, in one of the corrected reprints of the Troupenas edition on the Chicago site,<sup>20</sup> the tempo is 'Lento' while the sub-caption is simply 'Marche' (the expressively suggestive 'funèbre' having been expunged). These are the result of changes made in an intermediate impression: that is, in the second published impression<sup>21</sup> the 'Lento' was added and the 'funèbre' was removed.<sup>22</sup> Viewing either the CFEO or the

17 For discussion of other copying errors in the Breitkopf *Stichvorlage* see John Rink, 'The Barcarolle: Auskomponierung and apotheosis', in *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 208–209 notes 12 and 13.

18 Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, xli.

19 See <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/>. This score is identified as 35–0-TR in Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, p. 288.

20 See <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/dig/chopin/004/>. This score is identified as 35–1c-BR in Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, p. 289, where the publication date is given as 'between 10/1850 and c. 1860' versus Chicago's '1851?'.  
21 Identified as 35–1a-TR in Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, p. 289.

22 Compare the separate second edition of movements 3 and 4, published by Troupenas in late 1849 after Chopin's death. (See <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/>).



Chicago scores in isolation would engender a false understanding of the music's creative history and risk overlooking a significant change of mind which almost certainly can be traced to Chopin himself – an attribution which is likely to be more reliable in this case than with the routine corrections of typographical errors made in successive reprints of the French first editions.<sup>23</sup> Note that this discussion has as much to do with the 'status' of the respective sources as with their conditions of production: the questions in this checklist are not mutually exclusive or easily separated.

### 3. Who prepared it?

Even when a given source was prepared by Chopin himself, one needs to consider when this was done and what his notational habits were at the time (quite apart from the specific conditions of production relevant to the source). Despite the endurance of certain notational tendencies, among them discontinuous bar lines across the two staves, the hand of the young Chopin was not identical to that of the composer in his mid to late thirties.<sup>24</sup> A case in point is the positioning of downward stems on the right or left side of noteheads, likewise the shaping of arpeggiation signs.<sup>25</sup>

As for those who made copies of Chopin's manuscripts, it is important to know how reliable they were as scribes (to the extent that their identity can be determined in the first place) and also the degree to which their own notational habits may have influenced the appearance of the music text in the first editions or other derivative sources. Consider, for example, the Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4. In Chopin's autograph (used as a *Stichvorlage* for the French first edition), the second right-hand note in bar 11 is a 'long appoggiatura', without a diagonal stroke, whereas in Julian Fontana's copy (which served as a *Stichvorlage* for the German first edition), this note has a stroke, suggesting that it should be played as

23 Nevertheless, it is striking that the music text in the French first editions in particular underwent successive refinements during Chopin's lifetime, whereas after his death in 1849 only one of the editions was modified. Compare this to the German and English first editions, where almost the reverse occurred. For discussions, see Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, pp. xxxiii–xxxv.

24 See Jan Ekier, 'On questions relating to the chronology of Chopin's works. Methods. A few examples', in *Chopin's Musical Worlds: The 1840s*, ed. Artur Szklener (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2008), pp. 178–182.

25 Ekier (*ibid.*, p. 178) distinguishes 'three periods in the notation of downward note stems [...] in the autographs':

- all on the left – 1821;
- mixed stems, i.e. on left and right – until 1829;
- all on the right – from 1829.

A similar scheme is proposed for arpeggio signs (*ibid.*, 181):

- wavy lines – to 1837;
- mixed signs, i.e. wavy lines and vertical curves – to 1843;
- vertical curves only – from 1843.

According to Ekier, it may be possible to determine the chronology of given sources on the basis of the manner of notating elements such as these.



a grace note rather than on the beat and as the first of two successive quavers, in the manner of an eighteenth-century long appoggiatura.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to ask whether Fontana was intentionally modernising Chopin's notation; this is unlikely, however, given that he was one of Chopin's most trusted and faithful amanuenses. Instead, did he regard his 'grace note' as *equivalent* to the composer's 'long appoggiatura'? Possibly, but to be certain one would have to conduct a comprehensive comparison of other Fontana copies and the counterparts on which they were based. Or was the stroke a mere slip of Fontana's pen, arising from notational habit rather than intention? That is my own hunch, but whatever its motivation might have been, the grace note made its way into the German first edition and in that context has come to influence innumerable performers as well as editors.<sup>27</sup>

Not only is the identity of certain scribes unknown, but most of the engravers who prepared the plates of the first editions have never been identified, nor the professional correctors involved at different stages of production, both before and after initial publication. It is possible that the 'copy-editing' referred to earlier was carried out by the engravers themselves, who may also have been responsible for the pencilled annotations (known as *Stechereintragungen*) found in many surviving *Stichvorlagen* to indicate the division of the music into successive systems on the page. Engravers at the time tended to *reproduce* rather than *interpret* notation – hence the incorrect positioning of the pedal markings in bars 18–20 of the Prelude in D major Op. 28 No. 5 in all three first editions, which resulted from Chopin's ambiguous notation in the French *Stichvorlage*.<sup>28</sup>

An interesting counterexample may be found in the Prelude in E major Op. 28 No. 9, in that both Chopin's autograph and Fontana's copy thereof align the right-hand dotted quaver/semiquaver figuration in bar 1 *et seq.* with the triplet below, whereas in all three first editions the right-hand semiquaver is positioned after and thus separated from the last triplet quaver. It is uncertain who took the decision to treat the right-hand parts like this in both the French and the German editions:<sup>29</sup> the fact that these resulted from distinct filiations makes their consistency in this respect all the more remarkable.

Nor is it certain who introduced a flat sign before the final right-hand *e*<sup>1</sup> in bar 3 of the C minor Prelude Op. 28 No. 20 in both the German first edition from 1839 and a corrected reprint of the English first edition from c. 1858. The fact that the German *Stichvorlage* – i. e. the copy by Fontana – follows Chopin's manuscript and thus lacks the flat sign means that either at the copy-editing stage or when proofs were corrected a conscious decision to include it must have been taken – but by

26 All of these sources can be viewed at <http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/>.

27 See for example the Preludes volume edited by Ewald Zimmermann in the Henle Urtext series (Munich, 1969).

28 For discussion see John Rink, 'Authentic Chopin: history, analysis and intuition in performance', in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 233–234, note 54.

29 The English first edition, which was based on a corrected reprint of the Catelin edition, follows the latter in this respect.



whom? The change made to the English first edition in c.1858 may have been intended to align it with its German counterpart – but, again, we do not know who decided this. Ultimately, the identification of the individual ‘actors’ in these scenarios is less important than the realisation on the part of those consulting these and other sources *that the music reflects the decisions and interpretations of one or more people*, which is to say that sources such as these are neither ‘neutral’ nor independent.

#### 4. *For what purpose(s) was it intended?*

One needs to understand whether Chopin prepared a given manuscript for his own use (as a result of which it may contain obscure abbreviations, scrawls and scribbles, along with purposeful omissions), for a publisher (in which case the manuscript may have been notated in the knowledge that minor deficiencies – e.g. missing clefs or accidentals – would be eradicated during the publication process), for a friend or associate (which could explain a lack of detail or relative ‘incompletion’ in other respects), and so forth. As for copies, these too may have had either a private motivation – perhaps as performance scores intended for the copyist’s own use, as keepsakes, or even as hagiographic tokens – or an intended public use such as *Stichvorlagen*, presentation manuscripts and so forth. As for the first editions, the very existence of three for most of Chopin’s mature music itself reflects the need to protect against loss of revenue from piracy, while the subsequent impressions that appeared also had an avowedly commercial *raison d’être*. This explains why changes were made in numerous German and English first editions after Chopin’s death, both of which remained on the market for many decades because of longer periods of copyright protection compared to the French first edition. An especially entrepreneurial approach was taken over some sixty years by Chopin’s principal English publisher and his successors, including a ‘systematic process of renovation’ starting in the 1870s, which was but one phase of an ‘extraordinary amount of revision and refinement of [the firm’s] original editions, virtually all of which were modified at some point’.<sup>30</sup>

#### 5. *How does it relate to other sources?*

I have emphasised throughout this discussion that determining the relationships between the sources of a given work that survive as well as those that can no longer be located is of the utmost importance. Not only is it the case that ‘a Chopin first edition cannot be reliably identified until each of its components has been thoroughly scrutinised’, but ‘rigorous and comprehensive comparison is required of all surviving impressions of the edition in question, given that revisions typically were made over several decades if not longer’.<sup>31</sup> The same holds for manuscript material as well.

30 Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue*, p. xxxv.

31 *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.



As a final example, consider the Mazurka in C major Op. 24 No. 2. A surviving autograph manuscript served as a *Stichvorlage* for the German first edition, which was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in December 1835. Although it might be tempting to regard the music in this manuscript as definitive, that is not the case – nor, as I have suggested, should one assume that any Chopin source necessarily has such a status.<sup>32</sup> It so happens that the German edition was prepared according to a variant of the ‘Op. 11 scenario’ described above, although here Chopin gave his manuscript not to his French publisher but to Breitkopf & Härtel, which engraved the piece and apparently then sent at least two sets of proof-sheets to Chopin in Paris. After returning one of them to Breitkopf – presumably with corrections – the composer made some changes to bars 98, 102 and 103 in the remaining set of proofs, which he then handed over to his French publisher Schlesinger. As a result, the revised version appeared in the French first edition as well as in the English first edition, which was engraved on the basis of the latter. Thus the comparatively simple version of these bars in both the autograph *Stichvorlage* and the Breitkopf edition should be regarded not as definitive but simply as reflecting Chopin’s intentions *at one stage*. On the other hand, he never intended another feature found in all three first editions – the metronome mark,  $\text{♩} = 108$  – which the German engraver erroneously took from the first mazurka when engraving the second, whereas the marking on the surviving autograph manuscript of No. 2 is the much faster  $\text{♩} = 192$ .

The point of this example and the others that have been adduced is that viewing any single manuscript or first edition without regard to the full range of relevant source material could lead to significant misunderstandings or false attributions. Only when the status, provenance, conditions of production, purposes, relationship to other sources, and contents as well as omissions have been fully considered can one start to draw more robust conclusions. Even then these may remain elusive.

32 In any case, it is better to avoid simplistic attributions of ‘definitiveness’ to either early, intermediate or late versions of pieces. As I have already noted, Chopin’s conceptions of a given work were susceptible to continual change, and therefore one should regard each version as representing his musical thoughts *at the moment in question* rather than necessarily for all time. This point tends to be forgotten by musicians and musicologists alike who attach inordinate weight to specific readings without taking into account the broad contextual considerations that might be relevant. For further discussion of relevant issues see Jeffrey Kallberg, ‘The Chopin “Problem”: simultaneous variants and alternate versions’, in *idem*, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 215–228.



## Principles and performances

From this discussion emerge four key principles:

1. No source should be viewed in isolation.
2. The contents of sources should not be taken at face value, but instead must be interpreted with respect to their provenance, motivation, instrumental inception, relationship to other sources, and so on.
3. In reaching decisions about musical content, a consensus-based, 'law of averages' approach may be inappropriate.
4. Multiple interpretations of the contents of a source may be legitimate, even if only one can be adopted on a single performance occasion.

The third principle requires a brief explanation. It may be that a particular feature appears in, or indeed is absent from, all primary sources of a given piece except one. Despite this broad consistency, it should not be assumed that the feature or lack thereof reflects Chopin's intentions. For instance, the reading in question could have stemmed from the earliest of the sources – possibly an autograph *Stichvorlage* – and then been transmitted into all other sources except for, say, a separate autograph manuscript or one of the first editions in which a revision was carried out at the composer's initiative or that of the engraver or professional corrector. A simple example can be found in bars 3 and 85 of the Impromptu in A-flat major Op. 29, where a flat sign to the final right-hand note is absent from all sources (including the scores of Jane Stirling, Camille Dubois and Ludwika Jędrzejewicz) except for the German first edition, which is uniquely 'correct' in respect of this essential accidental. A more complex case is that of the right-hand flat sign in bar 3 of the C minor Prelude, discussed above. This is absent not only from Chopin's autograph *Stichvorlage*, Fontana's copy thereof, and early impressions of the French and English first editions, but also from a presentation manuscript prepared by Chopin in 1840 as well as the Dubois and Jędrzejewicz scores. In contrast, the flat sign is present in the German first edition and a revised, posthumous reprint of the English first edition, as previously noted, in addition to the Stirling score (where it appears to have been pencilled in by Chopin, judging from the handwriting), another presentation manuscript that Chopin produced in 1845, and a copy in George Sand's album, probably dating from the early 1840s. Here a merely quantitative consensus would prove inadequate, as would black-and-white assertions about which of the two readings is 'right' or 'wrong'.

By way of conclusion, it would be useful to consider how an individual performer might approach the primary sources in view of this discussion, not to mention the welter of complexities surrounding Chopin's manuscripts and the first editions as a whole. Elsewhere I have made the seemingly obvious point that because the score is not the music, nor is the music fully represented by the score, the work undertaken by performers extends well beyond mere



interpretation.<sup>33</sup> In short, playing music is a matter not of 'reproducing' a piece and remaining faithful to composers' intentions as a matter of absolute priority, but of engaging in a *creative practice* which involves making the music one's own, thereby extending the very boundaries of the piece in question. Nevertheless, the potential influence on creative performance of the score – or more specifically of musical notation – should not be underestimated. For those keen to perform Chopin's music with greater insight and inspiration, the primary sources that are now available in such profusion may yield new insights into the ways in which he conceived and perceived his music, but to achieve this enlightenment will require not only the years of study and reflection referred to before but also a keen awareness of the often conflicting implications of what one discovers in the sources, along with an ability to make decisions about those implications which are compatible with one's overall conception of the music. In other words, contextualisation is continually required if the end result is to cohere and persuade, yet in the full knowledge that different decisions might have worked equally well and indeed might be adopted on another occasion. Thus we see that performance in general – and any playing that we do with or in response to the sources – is, like the music itself, a matter of 'work in progress'.

33 See John Rink, 'Analysis and (or?) performance', in *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 35–58.





Figure 1. *Portrait de Frédéric Kalkbrenner*, Pierre-Louis Grevedon, dit Henri, 1829, E.995.6.42 Collection Musée de la musique / Cliché Anglès.